

**Robert Sanders**  
**Morgan County School District, Fort Morgan, CO - Superintendent (135)**

**COVER LETTER**

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**Cover Letter**

Please type your personalized cover letter here.

*Cover Letter*

**To Whom It May Concern,**

**I was excited to learn that the Morgan County School District superintendent position was open. I had worked at Green Acres Elementary as a principal in the 2009/2010 school year and enjoyed my time in the district. I left in the summer of 2010 to accept the position of superintendent of schools in the Buffalo School District in Merino, Colorado where I have been for the past 12 years.**

**I have lived and worked in Northeast Colorado for the past 19 years. I have been a principal in two districts in Morgan County and a superintendent in Logan County. I am very familiar with the area and very familiar with the demands of the position.**

**Living and working in and around the Morgan County School District for many years, I have had the opportunity to get to know many people in the area in particular the town of Fort Morgan and the school district. I still stay in contact with several of the people that I worked with while at Green Acres Elementary. I would be a good fit for the district because I am a hard worker, dedicated and I am a known quantity.**

**While I am completely happy in Merino I have always said that the only district in the area that I would want to apply for is Morgan County RE-3. I have enclosed my resume and other application materials for you to review. I would love an opportunity to interview for the position.**

**Thanks,  
Rob Sanders**

## **MORGAN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, COLORADO - CRITERIA**

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### **Morgan County School District, Colorado - Criteria**

*The Morgan County School District, Fort Morgan, Colorado, Board of Education, is seeking a highly qualified and fully licensed Superintendent.*

*Please describe your strengths and abilities as it relates to the Board's desired characteristics:*

- Strong collaborative leader who can partner with all stakeholders, empower, and motivate employees to do their best, and is approachable to all stakeholders.*
- Someone who is Decisive yet a Team Player, Innovative yet a Good Listener, and a Problem Solver yet also a*

*Visionary for Morgan County School District.*

- *A person of integrity and high moral character that holds themselves accountable to high standards. i.e., A good role model.*
- *An advocate for MCSD who maintains visibility within our schools and community and is active in professional organizations and community.*
- *A leader who understands and embraces our rural community and the cultural and academic diversity of a district with more than 20 spoken languages.*
- *A superintendent who will help develop and maintain a district budget while understanding Colorado school finance and Colorado law.*
- *An instructional leader that understands and values the teaching/learning process and has a proven record of improving Student Achievement and Supporting Student and Teacher Success.*
- *A leader to promote unity overall and bridge gaps.*

**Having worked for the Buffalo School District for the past 12 years as the superintendent of schools, I have had the opportunity to practice and refine almost all of Morgan County's Board desired characteristics.**

**In 2015, a group of superintendents got together to discuss the state of the accountability system in Colorado. There was a collective feeling that one test given on one day was not a true picture of a school district. We decided that we would not complain about the current system but instead, create an alternative system. We have spent the past seven years creating and refining the Student-Centered Accountability Program (SCAP). Through that process, each school district was to identify three to five priorities for their district. The priorities were to be developed through a series of meetings with staff based on the information that was received from a walkthrough by other member districts called a System Support Review (SSR). The SSR helped us to identify four priorities- Wellness, Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Collaboration (you can see them at <https://scapbuffalo.weebly.com>). We identified these priorities after examining input from students, staff, and parents regarding their perceptions of the school district as well as feedback from the SSR. Through this collaborative process, we were able to engage in a four-year project with Corwin Press and the work of John Hattie titled "Visible Learning", we were able to identify a need for a mental health specialist for the school district, and we were able to begin a robust curriculum writing project that has been beneficial for the students of the district. The first year after completing the K-6 math curriculum we saw some of the highest gains in math on the NWEA MAPS assessment that we have ever had in Merino. It was through this collaborative process that we took a deeper look at ourselves and the end product. It not only gave teachers ownership of the solution, but it also gave all employees a sense of urgency, a common direction, and a sense of unity going forward. It also gave the community a sense that they were heard, especially when they witnessed changes as a result of what they had said during the SSR.**

**I have been an educator for 29 years. During that time I spent 2 years in an urban district in South Texas on the border of Mexico as a teacher and a football coach, other than that, I have spent 27 years in rural Colorado as a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent. Of the 29 years, 19 of them have been spent in rural northeast Colorado. I believe I have a very good understanding of what is expected in rural school districts and especially in rural Northeast Colorado. When I was an elementary principal, I volunteered to run the scoreboard at high school volleyball games, participated in many of the activities that were put on by the school (such as the running race at Green Acres Elementary), and as a superintendent, I have made a conscientious effort to supervise activities and athletic events. Visibility, accessibility, and approachability are very important in small communities. Being involved and being around people gives me energy.**

**I understand that being a leader in a rural community it is important to be visible at statewide events where it is imperative to point out the differences of urban life versus rural life and to advocate for what is best for those of us not living in the front range. Having been an active member of the Colorado Association of School Executives and a supporter of the Colorado Association of School Boards, I have taken advantage of opportunities to provide input in order to affect positive change for rural Colorado. I have been a part of helping to get a ballot initiative on the statewide ballot regarding the way we fund education in the state, created an innovative way to accredit rural schools, was one of two superintendents that created a network of state superintendents to advocate for changes to the School Finance Act. I have most recently been involved with a group of superintendents, finance officers, and CASE representatives that is providing input to lawmakers for mill levy equalization across the state. Not only do I advocate for students and staff of the district where I work, but I advocate for rural education in all areas of the state.**

**As a leader in the state superintendent's group, I became educated on school finance. We spent a year learning how the current funding model works, how the dollars are generated, and how the dollars are distributed. Having spent so much time learning about school finance has helped me be a better steward of taxpayer dollars in Merino. It has helped me anticipate trends and to make accurate assumptions regarding revenue either coming into the district or leaving in terms of cuts or recissions. While in Merino, the state has seen revenue to schools cut and become institutionalized in the form of the Budget Stabilization Factor. I have had to work with my finance director to be creative with the budget. During that time, we have been able to**

**increase benefits, keep up with the cost of living, afford modest increases to the base, and build a new athletic facility while at the same time growing the general fund balance to over 6 months in reserve and keep our staff wages competitive. Less than a 5% turnover rate over the 12 years of my time in Merino is a direct result of the way the administration treats and respects staff. We have even attracted teachers from a four-day week to work for us in a five-day week.**

**Being a superintendent of schools means that we have to be many things to many people. We have an obligation to further the teaching profession by setting an example of what we expect and to be lifelong learners. As a leader, I think that it is important to make sure that you set the tone. I would never ask anyone to do anything that I am not willing to do myself. I have covered classes for teachers, driven bus routes, covered activities, plugged toilets, swept floors, and installed sprinkler systems in various places around the district, just to name a few things. I was trained by McREL (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning) in Balanced Leadership which teaches leaders in education how to manage people through change. I was also trained by McREL in Classroom Instruction that Works. I have trained principals, superintendents, and teachers throughout Northeast Colorado.**

**I have been asked in the past if I enjoy the pressure of being the superintendent. My response is always "absolutely!" My success is directly tied to the success of the people in the organization. I enjoy watching and supporting people in their positions and encouraging them to thrive. I have always given credit where credit is due. On the flip side, if something doesn't go as expected, I will shoulder the blame. I know that what we do as educators is hard. It is not always fun to come to work. If it was, it would not be called work- it would be called fun. Realizing this, I have always tried to create an environment that people enjoy coming into. An environment where they feel valued and supported. I am not afraid to sit down with a committee in order to come to a decision and live with said decision. I also know when decisions just need to be made. There is a fine line between "top-down" and "bottom-up" and my experience as a leader helps guide me when each is appropriate.**

**As I stated in my cover letter, I have said for years that the only superintendent position I would apply for in the area is the one in Fort Morgan. I feel that my strengths, abilities, and experience will be a perfect fit. I look forward to hearing from the committee.**

# Robert Sanders

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## Experience:

- 2010- Present: Superintendent of Schools, Buffalo School District RE4J, Merino, Colorado
- 2009-2010: Principal, Green Acres Elementary, Fort Morgan, Colorado
- 2003-2009: Principal, Beaver Valley Elementary, Brush, Colorado
- 2001-2003: Principal/Athletic Director, Cheyenne Wells High School, Cheyenne Wells, Colorado
- 2000-2001: Interim Principal, Moffat County High School, Craig, Colorado
- 1999-2000: Assistant Principal/Athletic Director, Moffat County High School, Craig, Colorado
- 1997-1999: Principal/Athletic Director, Cheyenne Wells High School, Cheyenne Wells, Colorado
- 1995-1999: Special Education Teacher, Cheyenne Wells Elementary, Cheyenne Wells, Colorado
- 1993-1995: Social Studies Teacher, Mary Hoge Academy, Weslaco, Texas

## Related Experience:

- 2001-2003: Jr/Sr High School Assistant Boys Basketball Coach, Cheyenne Wells, Colorado
- 1995-1999: High School Assistant Football Coach and Assistant Women's Basketball Coach Cheyenne Wells, Colorado
- 1993-1995: Assistant High School Football Coach, Weslaco, Texas

## Education:

- 2009: Superintendent Endorsement, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
- 1999: Master of Arts in Education, University of Phoenix- Administration and Supervision
- 1992: Bachelor of Arts, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado- Secondary History

## Honors:

- 2019: Nominated Colorado State Superintendent of the year
- 2019: Nominated Dumont Award
- 2018: Exceptional Leadership Award- Colorado Rural Schools Alliance
- 2006: Crystal Apple Award- Brush News Tribune
- 1999: Milken Family Foundation, National Educator Award

## Other Leadership Positions

- 2017-2018: Table of 2018, Great Education Colorado
- 2016: Chairperson Northern Superintendents' Council
- 2014: Co-Creator of the Student Centered Accountability Program
- 2013: Co-Founder of the Colorado State Superintendents' Group

## Presenter/Instructor/Facilitator/Educational Advocacy

- 2019 and 2020: National Rural Schools Conference Louisville, Kentucky and Denver, Colorado
- 2018: CASB Convention
- 2018: CASE Convention
- Various Years: Instructor for McREL- Balanced Leadership and Instructional Strategies that Work
- 2018: Over 40 Community Presentations for Amendment 73
- Every year: Active at the State Capitol on Educational Issues

# Robert Sanders

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## Professional Summary

While I did spend 2 years of my career working in South Texas I quickly moved back to Colorado where I have spent the last 27 years as a public school teacher and administrator. I am passionate about public education and I love the profession that chose me. I am seeking a leadership position in a school district that strives to improve the educational experience of all children, regardless of their background.

## Qualifications/Traits

- Experienced Executive Leadership
- Established Reputation Statewide
- Collaborative
- Instructional Leader
- Problem Solver
- Budget Development and Fundraising
- Knowledge of School Finance and Law
- Skilled in State and Local Advocacy
- Strong Relationship Builder
- Ability to make Tough Decisions

## Career Highlights

### **Co-Founder Colorado State Superintendents' Group**

Bret Miles and I traveled the state talking to superintendent groups about the need for all superintendents to come together to advocate for change in school funding, accountability and state testing. This work eventually led to the creation of a letter sent to the legislature resulting in the largest buy-down of the Negative Factor (now known as the Budget Stabilization Factor). As a group we developed our own version of the School Finance Formula and the drafting of HB-18-1232 with Representative Dave Young.

### **Table of 2018**

I was asked to serve on the Table of 2018. I was the voice of rural schools in Colorado. The work we accomplished was the creation of Amendment 73 and the eventual campaign. We collaborated with a diverse group of people and organizations to create a statewide ballot initiative in order to change the Colorado Constitution to better fund public education in the state. While it failed at the ballot box, it was (and still is) the highest approval rate for a tax initiative (non-sin tax) since the passage of the TABOR Amendment.

### **Student Centered Accountability Program (SCAP)**

I am proud to be one of the five original members of the Student Centered Accountability Program. Feeling that the existing accountability system in Colorado was inadequate, we set about to develop a way to look at an entire school system as well as the individual student experience in order to evaluate strengths and weaknesses. We developed peer observations, parent, student, and staff feedback loops. We have been recognized statewide as leaders in accountability. We partnered with Generation Schools Network, Batelle for Kids, CU Denver, Colorado Department of Education, Hewlett Packard, The Nathan

Yipp Foundation, and Dell. We have grown from 5 school districts to 14 and have presented all over the state as well as from California to Maine.

**Merino Track and Field Construction**

When I first got the job in Merino we had a two-time state champion girls track team. The facility that they had was not in the best shape and was under water most of the season. The teams had to practice at other facilities or run on the highway. I made it a goal of mine to raise most of the money through grants, donations, and fundraisers. It took approximately 9 years, but we finally completed the project in October 2020. The Merino community now has an all-weather 8 lane track and a completely rebuilt football field with state of the art LED lights.